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THE

CHRISTIAN'S DEATH, NO CAUSE FOR SORROW.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,
MONTREAL,

On Sabbath, 21st May, 1848.

BY

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To render some of the allusions in the following discourse intelligible, it may be necessary to mention that it was delivered on the occasion of the lamented death of an amiable young lady,* a member of the church to which the author statedly ministers, in circumstances that rendered that sad event doubly affecting, and the consolations that are suggested in the discourse both pertinent and just. Several families had also been recently called to mourn their separation from some dear object of their love—a child, a parent, or a friend. The discourse was composed without any view to its publication: and solely with the design of bringing before the mourning families of the lamented dead the consolations of the gospel of Christ. Deeply sensible of its imperfections, had the author consulted his own feelings, it would have never appeared in its present form; but he feels he is not at liberty to withhold it, if it can in any degree contribute to the comfort or edification of those, whose spiritual interests are very dear to him, at whose request it is now printed, and to whom, with affectionate sympathy, it is dedicated.

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* Miss Spier.

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SERMON.

JEREMIAH, xxii. 10.—"Weep ye not for the dead."
REVELATIONS, xiv. 13.—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

IN these words, the Prophet alludes to the death of Josiah, one of the best and most pious princes that swayed the sceptre of Judah. "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father," and closed a long life of uniform piety, benevolence and zeal, amidst the loud and unfeigned lamentations of his people. Jehoahaz, who succeeded him on the throne, possessed none of the virtues of his father, and the prophets of God declared that the accumulating guilt of the nation would receive the most awful punishment, during his reign and that of his brother. He had scarcely swayed the sceptre three months when he was dethroned by Pharaoh Necho, and sent in chains to Egypt, where he terminated in captivity his inglorious life.

His brother Jehoiakim, who succeeded him on the throne, rendered himself odious to the people by his oppression and cruelty. Having cast off the Assyrian yoke, his capital was besieged, he was himself slain, (probably leading a sortie,) and his body ignominiously cast on the highway to be devoured by dogs. There were none in the whole kingdom who mourned for him—none who would venture

without the walls of the beleaguered city to bestow on his unhonored remains the common rites of sepulture. As Jeremiah predicted, "He was buried with the burial of an ass."

How much more was the honored death of Josiah to be envied, than the miserable slavery and disgrace of his successor to the throne! The prophet, in the text, endeavours to arouse the minds of the people of Judah to a just sense of their condition, by contrasting the calamity they had just sustained, in the death of their pious sovereign, with the still greater evils they were about to suffer during the overthrow and captivity of his ungodly sons. The Jews had indeed much cause to lament the death of the good Josiah, for in his days there was peace; all the ordinances of God were devoutly and carefully observed, and the blessings of religion diffused a sacred joy over the land. But the fate of his beloved country was bound up with his own. It required the vigorous energy of sovereign power to curb the passions and controul the contentions of a corrupted and debased people. When that was withdrawn, and the reins of authority fell into feebler hands, disasters, consequent upon misrule and civil dissension, followed with fearful rapidity, and foreign oppression completed what despotic tyranny and domestic faction had almost accomplished. The prophetic eye of Jeremiah saw afar off the gathering storm. Blending the disastrous details of their impending misfortunes with his exquisitely pathetic lamentations for their departed monarch, he celebrated the funeral obsequies of the nation, with

those performed over the last of her kings. But if the Jews had cause for mourning and lamentation, it was for themselves, not for their king. He died full of years and full of honor, beloved by his people and at peace with his God;—"the righteous is taken away from the evil to come," but "the wicked is reserved for the day of evil." God rewarded the exalted piety of Josiah, by sparing him from the bitter trial of seeing the throne of his kingdom overturned—his people spoiled—his country pillaged—the temple of his God profaned. It would have been well for his sons had they also been taken away, when the crimes of the world lay lighter on them, and their deaths would have been mourned over by an affectionate and grateful nation. But they forsook the God of their father, and he left them unprotected in the day of calamity. He spared them, to fill up the measure of the nation's iniquity to overflowing fullness, and to be instrumental in bringing on the heads of their ill fated and guilty countrymen, the vengeance of heaven. Instead of being honored in life and lamented in death, they were carried captives into a foreign land, and after spending in wretchedness and chains the rest of their days, unworthy of human sympathy, they descended to the tomb afar from "the place of their fathers' sepulchres."

Nor have we greater reason to mourn for the dead "who die in the Lord," than the Jews had to mourn for their lamented monarch. We cannot indeed suppress the emotions which the death of our friends awaken. We have an instinctive abhorrence of the

loneliness, the darkness, and putrescence of the grave. We naturally sympathise with those who are consigned to the narrow house, where no sounds of life or love can reach the ear. The breaking of the ties that bind them to our hearts, and the interruption of that endearing and familiar intercourse which we enjoyed with them, while they were yet with us, awaken emotions of intense sorrow. We look back on the pleasing occurrences of life, where our happiness was in some measure identified with their being; and, in the language of David, we are ready to exclaim, "I am distressed for thee * * * very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful." We look around, and the scenes of nature, which were so beautiful, when together we gazed on them, have lost to us their charms. "Ye mountains! * * * let there be no dew upon you, neither let there be rain, nor fields of offerings." We look forward, and the path of life seems dreary and desolate without them. Trials, which, with their support, would only break the dull monotony of existence, appear overwhelming; and, in the wailings of despair, we are too apt to give vent to our sorrows.

It is, however, the imperfect views we take of the state of the dead that leads us to weep for them. Their condition is often much more to be envied than that of the living. Amidst the trials and disappointments of life—amidst the sins and temptations of the world, the sorrowing survivors may soon have much more reason to bewail their own condition, and to long for the time "when they

shall go whence they shall never return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death,—a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Even apart from the views which the gospel gives of the state of the dead who die in the Lord, there may be much that renders the stillness and repose of the tomb preferable to a life of pain, anxiety and sin. The life of the world is at best but a living death—a consciousness of separation from God, the fountain of life, and of that all-pervading power, consequent on that separation, which mars and will ultimately destroy all the earth-born hopes and expectations of man. In so far as our views extend—for they are confined to the melancholy associations of the grave—there is nothing so deplorable in the unconsciousness of the dead, as the intolerable anguish and pain that often far outweigh all the comforts and enjoyments of mortal life.

But it is the views which the gospel gives us of the state of the dead who die in the Lord that extracts the sting from grief. It is the light of life and immortality, radiated from the pages of inspiration, that gives the text its force and meaning, and causes the wounded heart, even in the deepest gloom of bereavement, to " rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." It must be confessed, it is a bitter thing, to be separated from our friends and families by death. It is terrible to be severed forever from those beloved beings on whose affections our hearts could evermore repose—whose inter-

course threw over the path of life a ray of serene gladness—and to endure that intense anguish that accompanies the rending asunder of ties that have long bound us to those with whose existence our own seemed inseparably entwined. Oh! it is distressing to bid a long farewell to those who have counselled and instructed us, and taught us to walk in the path that leads to everlasting life, and whose holy examples have encouraged us to virtue and godliness,—to part with those who have borne with us the sorrows and trials of life,—to surrender those young and happy beings who have entwined themselves with the tenderest of our heart-strings. Deep is the sorrow and gloomy is the hour when such afflictions fall upon us. A thousand endearing recollections come upon the memory "to point the parting anguish,"—a thousand apprehensions crowd upon the imagination to render the future terrible. But still, it is not a scene of unmingled gloom. The dark shades of sorrow are beautifully tinted with the lights of hope and joy. A ray, warm from the source of immortality, illumines the darkness of the grave, and dispels its horrors; and the bitter cup which the mourner drinks, is sweetened with the tenderest love of our heavenly Father. When we consign to the grave, "in the sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality," the ashes of our friends, we are borne above the world and its sufferings. Our chastened hearts experience the consolations that flow from the annunciation of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" and the mind delights to re-

pose on the peaceful scenes of the heavenly paradise, revealed to the faith of the Christian. As the children of mortality, we grieve for the departure of those we love; but it is our own condition, rather than theirs who have gone to their "inheritance in light," that awakens our sorrow. It cannot be for them we weep. "They have fought the good fight and finished their course;"—they are freed from the troubles and conflicts of time;—they have passed into a region, where all that is pure and spiritual on earth shall be enlarged; and they shall find in God a well-spring of blessedness, and in the holy angels and glorified saints around the throne, fit associates in their happiness. Weep not then for the dead; neither bemoan them who die in the faith of the gospel. "Their sun shall go no more down," "the days of their mourning are ended." They are the inhabitants of that better land, "where all tears shall be wiped from every eye," and sorrow shall be forever unknown.

"Take comfort, Christians, when your friends
In Jesus fall asleep;
Their better being never ends—
Why then dejected weep?"

The removal of our beloved relatives and friends, who have "fallen asleep in Jesus," when contemplated in the light which the faith of the gospel sheds upon it, leaves no reason to mourn on their account. The change in their condition is, to them, a blessed one; and could we form even a faint conception of the happiness into which they have entered, we would neither wish for their return, nor lament that they remained not with us on earth,

where they would have been exposed to the storms and tempests of mortal life. We would reserve our commiseration for those who still linger out a term of probation in this valley of tears, and have to contend a little longer with the trials and temptations of an ensnaring world. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me," said our blessed Lord, when the cruel insults and heavy sufferings which he endured, were fitted to melt the stoniest heart; as if he had said, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children. My sorrows will soon be ended. They will issue in the redemption of a ruined world. Ignominious though they be, they will elevate the nature, in which they are endured, to God's right hand, and obtain for me, as the Mediator between God and man, 'a name that is above every name, that is named in heaven above or on the earth beneath.' Hence — cruel, and painful, and infamous though they are, they should rather be regarded as grounds for gratitude and joy, than for sorrow and regret. But weep for yourselves—your sufferings will be more lamentable. While they will be such as never before fell to the lot of the children of men, nor will ever be equalled in the future history of the world, they must be endured by you, unsupported by the conscious innocence that sustains me, through all these scenes of treason and ingratitude,—or by the prospect of such blessed results as flow from the travail of my soul."

With what propriety might the language of the text; or Christ's counsel to the lamenting women,

be addressed to those who inconsolably mourn over the departure of their friends from this world of sin and strife; "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan them, but weep for yourselves." In this world we can only expect to meet with tribulation and sorrow. The holiest and best are not exempted. But from such trials *they* are free who have fallen asleep in Jesus. They have quitted with victory the field of contest. They have passed the bourne that separates holiness from sin, and blessedness from sorrow. "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Had their days on the earth been prolonged, suffering and sorrow might have befallen them; trials, perhaps greater than they could have sustained, might have overwhelmed them. Their bodies might have been racked with pain, and their minds distracted with anguish. Temptations might have overcome them, even had they escaped the various ills incident to early life. Sinful pleasure might have seduced and corrupted them, and involved them in eternal ruin. But from these dangers they are removed. They shall neither, by misconduct, bring disgrace on their friends, nor be sensible to the emotion of shame, which the folly or wickedness of their friends might have awakened in their breasts, had they only remained a little longer dwellers on the earth. Whether the Christian looks to the evils that reign in this world, or turns his eyes to the happiness of heaven, he will find little reason to mourn for the dead in Christ; but in both these prospects he will see much cause to weep for him-

self. He hath not yet attained the prize, neither is he yet made perfect. He has still to watch against temptation, and to strive against sin. He has still to mourn over the hardness of his heart, and his frequent short-comings in the path of duty. In contemplating Christ's sufferings, especially, his heart will not only be filled with godly sorrow, but also with shame and remorse:—with shame, that so much has been done for him when he has remained so inactive in the cause of his master;—with remorse, that so much has been suffered for him, and that he is so insensible to the love that brought Jesus from heaven to earth, and through seas of trouble to save him. Even though few of the ills incident to mortal life fall to his lot—though the painful consciousness of much imperfection and sin, may be alleviated by the faith and hopes of the gospel, so that sometimes he may even "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," still he will have to lament that he is yet afar from the presence of his Saviour and his God, and that land of unclouded light and uninterrupted peace and joy, where his affections are centred; and he will long eagerly for the time when, having escaped from "the crowd and filth of this world," he shall join the assembly of the Saints above.

But though our text does in the letter of it, it does not in the spirit of it, absolutely forbid us to mourn for the dead. It is evidently designed to call off the minds of the people of Judah from the loss they had sustained in the death of their excellent monarch,—to fortify them against impending

calamities, and prepare them for the discharge of the important duties to which they would be called by that sad event; and not to stop the flow of human sympathy. Such an injunction would be incompatible with the exercise of those feelings and affections God hath given us. Hard would be the heart, and equally devoid of Christian love and human tenderness, that would not bestow "the tribute of a sigh" to the pilgrim of earth, "quitting the warm precincts of the cheerful day," for the loneliness and corruption of the tomb. But while we mourn, we are not to mourn as those who have no hope. From the condition of the dead we must avert our eyes, and turn them to our own. We must recall to mind that the same destiny sooner or later awaits ourselves; and instead of useless lamentations for those who have preceded us, we should be actively preparing to follow them. In all seasons the removal of a fellow creature from the earth is fitted to awaken the mind to serious thought, and to urge us to be up and doing, while it is yet called to-day with us. The very idea that the empire of death extends over all the earth, and that there is not a moment but some victim falls beneath his stroke, is fitted to arrest our thoughtless career, and make us feel that we are "dying creatures in a dying world." But when our bereavements come in rapid succession—when the "king of terrors" enters our own dwellings and takes away "at a stroke, the delight of our eyes,"—when we see the little circle of our friends rapidly contracting, and the company with which "we took sweet council

and walked together into the house of God," quickly diminishing, we are forcibly called to the contemplation of the frailty of human life. A solemnizing influence pervades our minds; and the lessons of Providence, which "teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to heavenly wisdom," are more impressively communicated.

We are not without many warnings of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. We see the strong as well as the feeble, the young as well as the old, taken away. We see the rich in the possession of this world's goods, as well as the poor and the needy, obliged to obey the summons of death. We often see those go first into the grave who last came into the world; the vigorous suddenly cut down, while the feeble and diseased linger out life's utmost span. But in the end we see all subdued by the "king of terrors,"—all laid prostrate in the dust. Yet, notwithstanding these oft repeated warnings, and the frequent admonitions we receive to think seriously of the great change that awaits us all, with what eagerness do the bulk of mankind pursue the things of time, to the utter exclusion from their minds of all thoughts respecting the things of eternity. Oh! my friends, "these things ought not so to be". Time is the period of preparation and of hope. It is precious because it is short; and the consequences of its improvement or misapplication are incalculable. Let the frequent warnings you have received enter your inmost souls, and impress upon them these

solemn truths: that this world is not your home—that it is folly to cleave with undivided hearts to its unsatisfactory enjoyments—that it is worse than folly to become so absorbed in its pursuits and pleasures, as to have no thought and no desire beyond it, and thus to quench within you that spirit of piety, which, if devoutly cherished, would guide you to heaven and the possession of eternal happiness.

Of late, we have had frequent admonitions to be prepared for going hence. Several members of this congregation have been recently removed by death. While these mournful occurrences have pressed with a deeper sorrow upon the hearts of some, they are fitted to awaken the sympathetic emotions of all. For various reasons, and only at distant intervals, can we advert with propriety from the pulpit to the decease of our friends, and when we do so, our remarks must be general. The thoughts and feelings of a large assembly, though directed to the same objects, and flowing in the same channel, are in more intense exercise in some than in others. Hence, the consolations, which, to the wounded heart, would seem no more than adequate to the depth of its sorrows, would appear forced and exaggerated, to the mind that only feebly sympathised with the sufferer. But there are common qualities belonging to all the followers of Christ. Keeping these in view, without personal reference, our allusions may yet be special and direct. Thus, while with a tenderer sympathy we may pour out the balm of consolation from the sacred fountains of divine

truth, it will unobstructedly flow into the souls of all, and, with the blessing of God, be beneficial unto all.

"Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him," says the prophet in the text. This is the ordinary language of condolence; but it affords little consolation in the first gush of sorrow. It is addressed to the understanding, not to the heart. Grief feels; it cannot reason. The motives are powerful which the prophet suggests in alleviation of its bitterness, but they are earthly, and can meet only half the evil. They cannot penetrate the depths of the soul. They cannot bestow balm to the wounded spirit. They leave untouched the yearnings of the soul after life and immortality. It is the holy and heavenly minded John, that effectually comforts and consoles the bereaved mourner. He penetrates the very depths of humanity. He applies a spiritual balm to the bleeding wound. He points to the only friend that can sustain the soul in overwhelming sorrow. He connects death with life—eternal life. He offers not the cold suggestion that "they are taken away from the evil to come;" but speaks of the "dead in the Lord" as being in the continued exercise and reward of their beneficent works. The dead in the Lord he regards as alone being above the claims of our sympathetic sorrow. Blessed are they! There is no cause to mourn for *them*. They are at once freed from all that can grieve and distress them, and in possession of all that can delight and gratify them. "They rest from their labours —their works do follow them."

"Weep not for the dead!" Though there is great force and propriety in these words, when they are addressed to those who mourn for the "dead who die in the Lord," they are a mockery of woe, when the hopes of the gospel are not permitted to enter. "What," exclaims a late eloquent divine, "what, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle, or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness—to cover the ocean with mourning and the heavens with sackcloth,—or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

This is eloquently expressed. We are struck with admiration and awe at the solemn majesty of the picture. We are constrained to pay homage to the genius that clothed the universe with the weeds of sorrow, and that made the whole fabric of nature vocal that it might utter a befitting lamentation over one lost soul. But strong as the language is, it is not more so than the subject warrants. Assuredly no degree of sorrow could "express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe." The whole material universe put in the balance with one soul is as the dust—nothing—"less than nothing, and vanity;" "for what is a man profited

if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

But, though befitting tears cannot be found to lament the *lost*, is it proper that a single tear should be shed for those who die in the Lord? Shall we bemoan them who rest from their labours, and whose works do follow them? Shall we weep for those who are exalted to happiness far beyond what our conceptions can reach, and with whom, though absent in body, we may hold spiritual communion, for it is the privilege of believers to "have come to the spirits of just men made perfect?" O! yes! We may consecrate their memory with our tears, for we are still the children of humanity. We have, it is true, the hopes of the gospel to console us, but we have at the same time human feelings and human sympathies. We are not yet made perfect as the spirits of the just are—we are yet in the body—and to us still belong the various emotions which human intercourse awakens. We may then, without sin, weep for the dead, but we must not sorrow as those who have no hope. Like our blessed Lord at the tomb of Lazarus, displaying at once the power of God with the sympathies of man, we ought to exercise the faith of the spiritual life into which Christ hath called us, with the sympathies of our nature, as children of dust. We ought to give full flow to our feelings as men, but as men who have been "begotten to a lively hope of an inheritance in the heavens."

Often are we called to exemplify this exercise of earthly feelings, purified and elevated by Christian hope. Frequently we have followed to the house appointed for all living, the "infant of days," cut off like a tender flower by an untimely frost—or the blooming and sprightly child that has entwined itself with the tenderest fibres of the heart. The joy of the mother has been destroyed, the hopes of the father have been blasted, and a deep and an abiding feeling of sorrow fills their breasts. But only let them surrender their hearts to the influence of those consolations which the gospel so richly pours into the wounded mind, and they will find reason to dry their tears for the departed—or if they weep, to weep for themselves, because they are still so unlike, both in their condition and character, to those whom God hath called them to surrender to himself, and whom he loves with a more tender and intense love than they can possibly cherish for them.

And we have followed to the last resting place of man, the stalwart and vigorous frames of the young and the active, suddenly laid low, in all the majesty of strength. And we have laid in their silent beds the once powerful but now emaciated bodies of the bold and enterprising, carried away in the mid career of their usefulness—when hope and joy is strongest in the human breast—when the gentle assiduities of domestic love alleviated every sorrow, and augmented every feeling of happiness,—when many seemed to look to them, (under God) for support and protection. Under these bereavements we

have cause to mourn. When we think on the many excellencies that endeared them to our hearts —when we remember the promise which their lives gave of continued usefulness, had they been spared to us—when we feel the void occasioned by the interruption of personal and visible intercourse with them—and that their beneficent labours have terminated in the silence and inactivity of the grave; we have indeed reason to weep, but only to weep for ourselves. If they have departed, leaving the well grounded hope that they were made meet, through the merits of the Redeemer, for the inheritance of the saints in light; we have no real cause to mourn for them. They have gone to their rest and their reward. They are not dead. They sleep in Jesus. "Whosoever believeth on me," said the Redeemer, "shall never see death, yea, though he were dead yet shall he live." With them, who live in him, we may still enjoy spiritual communion. It is one of the privileges of believers while yet on earth, that they enter into fellowship with them, in the enjoyment of all that is spiritual and pure. Having resigned them to the mercy of God in Christ, it becomes us to look to ourselves. Their work is done. We have still much to accomplish. They have gone into the presence of God. As yet we are very unfit to appear before the Judge of all the earth—and we must "work the work of God" while it is yet called to-day with us.

And we have seen the young and the beautiful, vanish as the visions of the night from the eyes of those who admired and loved them. When, like

the opening spring, the world spreads before their enraptured eyes its enchanting prospects, and in the reciprocated endearments of friendship and love, they tasted the blessings with which our heavenly Father sweetens the cup of life,—and they were ready with grateful hearts, to say, "it is good for us to be here,"—the shadow of death darkened their path,—they heard a voice saying, "Arise! Depart! for this is not your rest!"—and suddenly the scenes of earth closed to their view; but brighter and more glorious visions opened in prospect.

Finally. We have followed to their last resting places the shrunk and shrivelled frames of some venerable pilgrims, who had been long battered by the storms and tempests of life, and were fain to lay their bodies down to rest, like the warrior who retires from some hard fought field. But why should we weep for the old who "have fallen asleep in Jesus." Their task was done. They had "fought the good fight, and finished their course." They had long enjoyed the privileges of the gospel, and had felt the sanctifying power of divine grace. They had the consciousness that God's Spirit was working within them, and would "perfect that which concerneth them," and they "waited with earnest expectation for the manifestatfon of the sons of God." When "a cry was made, 'Behold! the bridegroom cometh,' they were ready." They had not waited for the approach of the night for a convenient time to mature their christian character. Their habits of piety were early formed. In youth,

while their moral strength was yet vigorous, they uprooted from their hearts the vicious passions, which, had they been permitted to remain, would have embittered their last days, and have been more than they could have subdued with the diminished strength of old age. But their toils were early over;—the ways of godliness had long been to them ways of pleasantness and peace. They had long testified to the world, by the impressive teachings of a holy life, that the "gospel is the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation." Their hopes and affections had been long placed on the things that are above, and they awaited, with calm resignation, "the appearing of their Deliverer" from the burden of sin and trouble that inseparably belongs to man's fallen state. The world had no attractions for them. They had "seen the tombs of all their friends," and they anticipated their own with joy. No ties bound them to the earth; and they looked forward to a reunion with those from whom they had been separated, with holy hope. "The grasshopper had become a burden," and, friendless and unknown, they would not remain afar from all that they love, —from their heavenly home—from their heavenly Father—and that great family, of which Christ is the head. Where their Lord is they would also be. Having finished their course, they have left to the young and the active the field of conquest, in which they had long occupied a distinguished post; that they might *go up* to take possession of their heavenly inheritance, and assume their immortal crowns.

Weep not then for the dead! Weep not for the infant of days, who now, with expanded intellect and enlarged perceptions of the divine perfections, stands with the worshipers around the throne of heaven, hymning the praises of the Redeemer! Weep not for the young follower of the "Captain of Salvation," who, from the field of spiritual warfare, hath ascended in triumph to the abodes of peace! Weep not for the "wise virgin," who, with trimmed lamp, hath "entered with the bridegroom to the marriage!" Weep not for the "old disciple" who hath departed full of years and full of honors, and has been "gathered to his fathers," "like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season!" With them all the great purposes of God have been served; and, like the "watchman of Ephraim,"* they are now with their God. Could they again address you, you would hear their well-known voices, adopting the language of their Lord, thus chiding your immoderate sorrow, "if ye loved me ye would have rejoiced, because I said I go to the Father."

How admirably are these consolations fitted to remove the gloom and depression of soul, which the virtuous naturally feel, when they are separated by death from the objects of their love. But what renders them more precious still, they are not, like the consolations of the world, unsubstantial and delusive. While they reach the very depths of the human soul, and leave not one painful feeling unsoothed, they come with the irresistible efficacy of

* Elijah, as Dr. Horsley supposes—vide Trans. Hos. 9. 8. and note.

divine power. Christ gives not HIS PEACE as the world gives. His promise is stable, as His own unchangeable nature. The certainty of His people's eternal happiness, He rests on His own triumphant work, and the immutability of His love. He hath left nothing for humanity, in its weakness, to accomplish. His work is His own, and it is the work of God. Of the people there were none with Him. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else." The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is the guarantee for the fulfilment of all His promises; and the love which He displayed, is the manifestation of the inseparable union, in which He hath bound His people to himself. If, then, "we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." "He was delivered for their offences, and was raised for their justification;" and he "will come again to receive them to himself, that where he is, there they may also be." "Precious in his sight is the death of his saints." Even in the cold grave they are the objects of his love, and the subjects of his kingdom; "for to this end, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living."

These consolations, founded as they are on the character and work of the Divine Redeemer, leave nothing for the children of sorrow to desire besides. Darkness may settle on their worldly prospects; but the light of immortality, revealing to the soul, the love, the compassion and redeeming power of

the Son of God, will brighten their views of their heavenly inheritance. Their thoughts will be withdrawn from the remembered endearments of earthly intercourse, by the stronger attractions of the "fulness of joy that is at God's right hand, and the pleasures that are forevermore." Or, if their minds will revert to the days that are past and gone, it will only be to catch a tone of higher exultation from the sweet remembrances of piety, resignation and faith, that distinguished their departed friends, and that they may have a deeper conviction of the gracious truth, that "death is swallowed up in victory."

I trust my friends, that your hearts (often admonished, as you have recently been, of the utter vanity of all expectations and pleasures that are not associated with the hopes of heaven,) are deeply impressed with the conviction, that their boundless ambition,—their eager desire after happiness, can only be gratified by the gift of eternal life; and that the phantoms of time are of no importance, when compared with the realities of eternity. If ever we can feel the vanity of earthly expectations, and the certainty of heavenly hopes that rest on the "tried corner stone laid in Zion," surely we should feel them now. We have seen the one mournfully exhibited, and the other triumphantly displayed, in the experience of Her, whose recent removal from this congregation, to "the general assembly and church of the first-born" in heaven, has been the principal occasion for turning our attention, at this time, to the consolations which the

gospel addresses to mourners. Nursed in the lap of tender affection, and indulged in every reasonable wish, She, for whose departure we mourn, grew up to womanhood, loving and beloved. Life spread its fairest charms before Her, and, doubtless, the hopes which prolonged life inspires, filled her heart; but not indeed without the commingling distrust which the conscious insecurity of life ever awakens in the pious mind. Her "plighted troth," to one worthy of her affection, received parental sanction. Her joyous companions talked to her of love and happiness, and her heart beat responsively to the sound. Hope presented the cup of anticipated enjoyment, all wreathed with the most beauteous flowers of earth,—Death stood by, and, while yet untasted, dashed it enviously from her lips. All that the young heart could dream, of love and lasting joy, in blessed union with the cherished object of affection, seemed laid up in store for future years. The king of terrors seized the extended hand, and made her his own—made the winding sheet her nuptial garment—and the lonely grave her marriage bed. Disappointment, sorrow, and despair triumphed, where hope and joy so recently reigned, and the world seemed to be desolate and God-forsaken. But be hushed, this dark spirit of scepticism!—this clinging of the thoughts to the materialism of humanity, instead of the spirituality of its deathless life. One mightier than death was near,—claimed the victim as His own,—bore her to the land of life and light, and united her to Himself in love, by bonds that can never be dissolved. "Weep not

for the dead!" Let us follow her into the presence of God, and behold her arrayed in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and mingling with the souls of the just made perfect; and then, we will perceive that there is a force and meaning in the words beyond all that we have before imagined. "Weep not for the dead!"—"rather let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to the Lord God omnipotent, who reigneth! for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready; and to her is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white—for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

If, in the onward prospect, there is nothing to cause us to weep inconsolably for the departed, there is surely little in the retrospect. We may weep for ourselves, if we are earthly minded, for our expectations have been disappointed, and our hopes blighted. But She was spiritually minded. Her earthly hopes were subordinated to the loftier aspirations of life and immortality through Jesus Christ. It was this holy faith that sustained her in all her tribulations, and enabled her even to rejoice in the prospect of quitting this world, with all its proffered happiness.—It was this that enabled her to surrender without a regret, every object of delight, that she might go into that better land where joy is unmingled, forever to dwell in the presence of her Saviour and God.—It was this, that assured her that she would not only herself join the assembly of the saints on high, but that she would also, in God's good time, be re-united to those dear friends

she had left for a little season in this valley of tears. Such heavenly mindedness,—such placing of the affections on the things above, is not of human nature,—it is the work of the Spirit of God; and it gives us the fullest demonstration that there is a reality in religion which the mere worldling cannot appreciate, and a joy and consolation which he cannot feel.—"The peace of God that passeth all understanding, filleth the heart and the mind,"—"a peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

But while we have no reason to weep for the dead that die in the Lord, what loud and impressive calls, does their departure hence, leave with their surviving friends, and, indeed, with all the members of the church of Christ, to be prepared to follow them. Let us listen to these admonitions. Let us earnestly seek to have that spirituality of feeling which our departed friends exhibited—to maintain that indifference to the objects of time which they displayed,—to exercise that calm resting on the Redeemer which they enjoyed,—to cherish that hope of being forever with HIM who redeemed them with His blood, and even on earth, gave them, in the fruits of His Spirit, a foretaste of Heaven's blessedness.

Such, my christian friends, are the hopes which the gospel inspires,—such are the consolations it bestows. They yield the only balm that can soothe the grief-stricken heart. Seek ye to appropriate them. In this world of sin and death you will need them. Beloved friends will leave you, and what

can cheer you, in such an hour, but the delightful thought that they are gone to God. You may be soon laid in beds of languishing, and what can sustain you, but those offices of christian love which direct the eyes of the dying to the great sacrifice for sin, and teach the soul to hope for the forgiveness of past transgression, and the enjoyment of eternal blessedness, through Jesus Christ. You must, yourselves, soon take your departure hence, and what can fortify your minds against the terrors of death, but that calm and placid resignation to the will of God, that results from a firm faith in the promises of the gospel. These consolations are offered unto all; but they are not the portion of all. All may appropriate them in the faithful exercise of the means of grace; but many continue strangers to their influences. They are spiritual, and can only belong to those who spiritually apprehend them, and resign themselves to their power. They are the blessed fruits of christian faith and love,—the rewards bestowed only on those who have, through life, loved and served their Lord. To all besides, the gospel is but "the savor of death unto death,"—not "the savor of life unto life." The unfaithful and disobedient, conscious that they have more to fear than to hope from its truth, will never be able to reflect seriously on its discoveries, without horror and alarm. What then is the duty incumbent upon you all, in the circumstances in which you are placed, as dying yet immortal creatures? Surely it is that you earnestly strive, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to qualify

yourselves for associating with the blessed in heaven, and to sow in the hearts of those committed to your care the seeds of immortality. Surely it is that you earnestly seek to have the experience of the inward transforming power of the Spirit of Christ, and to be linked not only in the bonds of natural affection, but also of christian union, to those who are dear to you. Do you desire to leave with your sorrowing friends the balm of consolation, when you depart hence, to be no more forever? —Then, let the form and the power of godliness appear in your conduct through life. Do you desire to have such a solace to your sorrows under bereavement?—Then, teach your children—teach all whom you love—to fear, love, and serve God. Believe me there is nothing, in looking back to the world from a death bed, that affords such satisfaction as the evidences of a living faith, exhibited in the obedience of a holy life :—nothing so delightful in the remembrance of your departed friends, as the sentiments of devotion and the acts of benevolence that distinguished them. The simple hymns, so oft repeated in childhood's pure devotion, will seem the prelude to the perfected praises of heaven, which God ordains "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ;"—the giving of the heart in hope, and trust, and love, to a heavenly Father, but the earnest of that fuller and closer communion to which he has called them ; and the termination on earth of their labors of love, but the consummation of their blessedness.

O seek then, in fervent prayer, the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit! Read the word of God with an earnest desire to learn "the truth as it is in Jesus." "Walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless." Mark the footsteps of Jehovah, in the course of providence, and be ye fellow workers with Him in that great scheme, which, linking all holy intelligences in one great family, extends through all time, and has its consummation in eternity. Seek God, and ye shall find Him. His peace will fill your souls. Amidst the storms of life your minds will be tranquil. In its trials and disappointments you will be resigned; and, when you come to die, you will find HIM, whom, in the days of your youth, you remembered —whom in riper years you made your fear and your dread,—and whom in old age you made your hope and your stay,—your eternal dwelling place, and your sure portion evermore.

May God impress the truth on your hearts—bestow upon you all the comforts of his word,—and, finally, the crown of eternal life.—Amen.